



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Office of the
Commissioner

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Public Hearing – February 24, 2009 Transportation Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Joseph F. Marie Department of Transportation

S.B. 448 – An Act Requiring Construction of Sound Barriers along Highways in Fairfield County.

S.B. 555 – An Act Requiring the Construction of Sound Barriers.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) respectfully offers the following comments on S.B. 448 and S.B. 555 - both dealing with the construction of sound barriers.

The Department administers two programs in consideration of traffic noise and noise abatement. Type I projects relate to the proposed construction of a highway on a new location or the physical alteration of an existing highway which substantially changes either the horizontal or vertical alignment or increases the number of *through-traffic lanes*. The auxiliary lane must be long enough to function as a through-traffic lane and/or increase capacity. An auxiliary lane that is added between interchanges to improve operational efficiency should be classified as a Type I project, if the lane is at least 1.5 miles or if the lane is made continuous through a series of successive interchanges.

Type I projects are those that add capacity to an existing highway and are funded in part with federal dollars. Under these types of projects, traffic noise is considered and the necessary abatement measures are reviewed. Proposed noise abatement associated with such projects must be approved by FHWA for reasonableness, feasibility and cost effectiveness. Some criteria applied for reasonability, feasibility and cost effectiveness are: Households must be at least 300 feet from the travel lane of the highway. The estimated cost shall be a maximum of \$50,000 per household. The future noise level under the Build scenario approaches (within 1 db), equals or exceeds the FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria (23 CFR 772). The future noise level under the Build condition substantially exceeds (by 15 db or greater) the existing noise level, and abatement is able to be constructed.

Type II or Retrofit projects relate to proposed projects for noise abatement on an existing highway. In the mid-1970's, the Department established a Statewide (Type II) Retrofit Noise Abatement Program with the intention of being fair and equitable to all residents of Connecticut who are located along our interstate and intrastate roadways. The priority listing is based upon need in terms of noise levels, the number of households benefiting, cost, etc. A reevaluation of this Program was conducted in 1985 to prioritize projects in the order of importance. Legislation

was passed to fund the Type II Retrofit List under Special Act 85-107 for years from 1985 to 1989. Since approximately 1989, no funding has been provided.

The Statewide Retrofit Noise Barrier Listing has been in place since 1985 with approximately 132 areas still remaining and awaiting noise abatement based upon their priority ranking.

It is assumed that these bills do not require an update of the existing Statewide Retrofit Noise Barrier Program listing. If such an update is required, then in order to accurately rank residential areas as they are developed today, the existing Retrofit listing would have to be reprioritized and incorporated into an overall statewide listing. This would involve the hiring of additional staff and approximately a two year time period to perform noise monitoring and computer analysis, and to develop a new project priority ranking for each location based upon current development. The fiscal impact of such a potential reevaluation would be significant (approximately \$1.5 million). In addition, the fiscal impact of addressing the 132 areas in need of abatement would range from \$87 million to \$174 million.

For further information or questions, please contact Pam Sucato, Legislative Program Manager for the Department of Transportation, at (860) 594-3013.